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Reggae king's debut was worth the wait

By JUAN RODRIGUEZ
for The Gazette

Although considerably delayed, reggae music's debut at Salle Wilfrid Pelletier last night was well worth the wait.

The messenger of this unique syncopated beat from Jamaica was Jimmy Cliff, the most international of reggae stars, with instrumental backing from Joe Higgs and the Jamaican Experience, a group that's appeared on countless reggae discs.

The wildly mixed audience was filled with expectation — with the large number of West Indians eager for a real taste of the music back home, and an equally excited contingent of rock-oriented fans looking for the inimitable mellow atmosphere of reggae.

However, the show started half an hour late due to sound check problems and then — much to the disappointment of the audience — the first part was performed by a local group, Zak, whose jazz-rock imitations were frantically out of place.

Finally, ninety minutes after the scheduled showtime, Higgs and his cohorts warmed up the atmosphere for Cliff's arrival. The musicians were all top calibre reggae artists, who performed with the kind of deft touch that makes this genre so fascinating. With names such as Brother Phillip, Ranchie, Sly, Baga, Pablo, and Slicky, the musicians hooked themselves to the bobbing beat and added subtle embellishments on bongos, organ and guitar.

At last

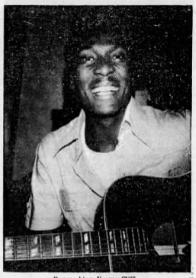
After Higgs and the Experience had rendered Johnny Too Bad, it was at last time for the king of reggae himself. Cliff walked on wearing the same type of blue jersey with white shining star that he sported in his starring role in The Harder They Come, the film that revealed the roots and role of reggae music to the world.

Cliff sang in a clear high pitched voice that provides a haunting counterpoint to the tasty rhythms.

Influenced by the soul inflections of American singer Sam Cooke, Cliff gives his material a more forceful delivery than many of his counterparts in the islands. This was particularly evident on Many Rivers To Cross, in which his sensitive anthem-like delivery lent the subsequent uptempo songs an added depth.

And it was obvious that Cliff's songs were more than mere "moon in June" ditties. They dealt with sex, family, local custom and the struggle for liberation in understated delicate terms. After listening to such songs as Fundamental Reggae, You Can Get It If You Really Want, The Harder They Come, Look at the Mountains and Dear Mother, one comes away with a complete human outlook.

Cliff's music neither preached nor pandered — rather it communicated a unique vision of life. It was relaxed, mellow and, after all that, filled with a sunny intensity that will linger through many a cold winter day.


Reggae king Jimmy Cliff

Mr. Horror goes straight

By DAVID FARRER
of UPI

VANCOUVER — Terror was his trademark . . .

Fu Manchu hatching diabolical Oriental plots for world domination. Dracula sinking his fangs into another succulent young neck. Vicious tong wars. Mad scientists. Dark, grim castles. Insane laughter and screams of fear.

It seemed that whenever nerve-tingling evil lurked in the minds of moviemakers, actor Christopher Lee was there to portray it on screen.

But now Lee, on his first visit to Canada, wants it known the "macabre fantasy" phase of his career is over.

"It is part of my professional past," he said. "That sort of thing can perhaps best be described as a type of artistic garote. You have to get out when you can.

"It is only now I am playing the challenging roles I feel I should be playing. Hopefully it is onward and upward. Certainly the signs are there."

The tall, lean British actor — he's 6-feet-4 — is in Vancouver to make his 130th movie, The Keeper, a low-budget thriller backed by a chunk of government money from the Canadian Film Development Corporation.

In it, Lee portrays the head of a mental home for wealthy patients. "A somewhat benevolent dictator who practises hypnotism in order to control them — and their money," according to a publicity release.

"He's a person who is a great deal more than he seems," says Lee. "To a large degree it's black comedy — very much a Chinese puzzle. A box within a box. But to say more would be to give the plot away."

The film set in the 1940s, is being produced by a Vancouver filmmaker, Don Wilson, 30, for Lionsgate Production Ltd.

For Lee, work on the movie comes during one of the busiest periods of his career.

From Vancouver he will go to West Germany to make an occult thriller, To The Devil A Daughter, in Munich with Richard Widmark. Then it's on to South Africa for a film with Trevor Howard. Other work in the Philippines and the United States is still under negotiation. A rock opera, Mephistopheles, is in the works.

Lee broke into action in London after serving as a Royal Air Force pilot in North Africa during the Second World War. A cousin who was then Italian ambassador to Britain introduced him to a filmmaker and he was given a one-line part in Corridor Of Mirrors, starring Eric Portman.

In 1957, he decided to plunge into the world of the macabre and took the role of the monster in The Curse Of Frankenstein.

McGill Chambre concert

Karr's bass creates wonder

Bassist Gary Karr

By JACOB SISKIND
of The Gazette

Gary Karr may be the world's most turned-on double bass player — but last night he was definitely turned off in the first half of his concert. He was appearing with the McGill Chamber Orchestra at the Theatre Maisonneuve and his reading of the Couperin Pièces en Concert triggered only mild applause.

But when he returned after intermission to play a Tarantelle by Bottesini, he hit his stride and carried the audience along on his own obvious enthusiasm for the piece and for the joy of playing it.

The Bottesini Tarantelle is pure kitsch but that is the sort of thing that Karr plays with greatest enthusiasm.

He can also play very musically, as he demonstrated most beautifully with the Bourrèes from the Bach Cello Suite in C added as an encore. Here his phrasing and sense of line were so impressive that I might have thought a master cellist was on the stage.

The audience responded even more enthusiastically and he returned to play another encore — a movement from the Eccles Sonata, which is one of the pieces that Serge Koussevitzky used to play at his double bass recitals.

In all of the works Karr's sound continued to be a source of wonder and amazement. The tone he gets from his bass is quite unlike anything you have ever heard and one tends to forgive the musical lapses that recall Francesco D'Andrade, the famous turn of the century baritone.

Karr tends to play and think like an operatic star of the most self-indulgent variety — when he is not playing Bach — but there is so much that is beautiful in what he does that one almost forgives, even if one cannot forget.

Wise choice

Alexander Brott chose wisely when he placed Karr in the middle of his program. Hearing Karr play obviously inspired the musicians of the McGill Chamber Ensemble to play with greater sensitivity and beauty of tone than they did before he came on stage.

As a result, the performances of the Respighi Airs and Dances and the Mendelssohn Symphony No. IX (written when the composer was a mere boy) had a lively quality and a sense of flow one did not hear in the Rameau Suite that opened the concert.

There were some really beautiful moments in the orchestral playing, and the solos contributed by Stephen Kondaks in the Respighi were a source of particular pleasure.

In the whole, the concert seemed to be building to a climax from the very outset and it worked out very well for all concerned.

Diana Ross in Mahogany

Film substitutes clothes for talent

By JULIA MASKOULIS
of The Gazette

Diana Ross' new film, Mahogany, the second since Lady Sings the Blues, brings to mind the old adage: What's a good singer like you doing in a movie like this?

Mahogany (at the York and Dorval) is a combination travelogue and fashion show presenting over 50 costumes designed by Ross herself for the movie — filmed against the backdrop of Chicago slums and Roman antiquities.

It is a film long-time fans of the sultry, sexy and spindly ex-Supreme should avoid, for her best talent — her voice — is purposely left out to launch her career as a 'dramatic' actress and clothes designer in one very expensive blow.

And blow it is. Breaking the umbilical cord with her one powerful talent, Ross substitutes clothes, props and other actors in a clumsy effort to keep above water. She gets no help from a superficial script and totally predictable plot.

CLICHES

It is difficult to say who is to blame in a movie that is completely hokey. Scriptwriter John Byrum (currently working on a script about a talking dog called Here Comes Sparky) certainly did his fair share of adding trivialities and clichès in a film which lacked originality to begin with.

The plot is a re-hashed version of the old American success formula. A bit of hard work, a dash of perseverance and dedication, a generous sprinkling of sex and you'll inevitably reach your goal.

Tracy Chambers (Ross) a very attractive girl from the wrong side of the tracks (who nevertheless looks like she just stepped off a Vogue cover and came to life) is determined to get to the other side.

Her ambition to become a clothes designer is realized when an unbalanced world-famous fashion photographer called Sean McAvoy (an aged Tony Perkins picking up where he left off in Psycho) sees her potential and brings her to Rome.

Diana Ross shows clothes — not talent — in Mahogany.

DECADENT

In the ultra-chic and very decadent surroundings of the Rome jet set, she meets Christian Rosetti (Jean Pierre Aumont) who delicately tucks her in a wing of his villa, opens a little factory on the premises (ridiculous!) and launches her career.

But our heroine at this point realizes that success "without the man you love is nothing" — and after showing her selection in a grande finale goes home to Chicago's south side, and Brian Walker (Billy Dee Williams), an aspiring young politician in her former neighborhood.

Even a noteworthy cast cannot help this film surface above the trivialities. Ross is totally unrealistic as a Chicago slum dweller, working by day and slaving away by night in design courses.

IMPOTENT

Williams, though, makes an entirely plausible politician — his good looks, dedication and chauvinism seem to emphasize his realism. Marissa Mell as the head of a Rome modelling agency is also very good, but that is due to the minimal lines she delivers. Otherwise, she is quite adept at looking ominous, suspicious, mysterious or jealous without saying too much.

And, of course, Tony Perkins is in there cast as the impotent photographer.

This is not a bad movie, except that there is nothing informative, aesthetic, original, good, wholesome, evocative, exciting, suspenseful or meaningful in it.

If the directoral debut of Berry Gordy (the man behind Motown Productions) was aimed at achieving triviality of a very high order, his goal is reached.

It would have cost much less had he staged a private fashion showing for Ross — and all that time, energy and money not been wasted upon the lady's whims.

Danish Pastries — Color — Plus — Moving! Exciting! Deep Love — 18 yrs Adults — Cinema Guy

From the author of Rosemary's Baby — Stepford Wives — Plus — Agatha Christie Ten Little Indians — Complete shows: 6:30-8:30 — Côte-St-Luc — 14 yrs.

A selection from Mutual Films — Pierre David presents — Special Section — a film by Costa Gavras — For All — 1.00, 3.00, 5.00, 7.00, 9.00 — French Version with English Subtitles — Kent — 6100 Sherbrooke W.

Lies My Father Told Me — For All — A Jan Kadar film — 3rd Week! — Cinema Place Ville-Marie 866-2644 — 12:20 2:15 4:10 6:05 8:10 9:55

A real 'Eye-Opener' — Keyhole Report — in color — Plus — Sassy Sue — Junior comes of Age — 18 yrs Adults — 12:05-2:60-6:40-8:30 — Eden — Bleury & Ste Catherine

The Parasite Murders — 14 years — Being terrified is just the beginning! — 12:45-2:40-4:45-6:55-9:00 Cine-Centre, Bleury & Ste Catherine — 1:25-3:25-5:25-7:25-9:25 Cote des Neiges 2, Plaza Cote des Neiges

The Life & Times of Xaviera Hollander — 18 yrs Adults — Special admission for this engagement $5 — Last days — Vendome

The Erotic Adventures of Poor Cecily — in color — Plus — Wide Open — 18 yrs Adults — Eve

Now Playing! — The Devil Made Me Do It — So hot it's banned in hell — in color — 18 years Adults — Also — Passions with a sting of death! Antigone — Devil: 12.00 3.00 6.00 8.50 — Antigone 1.30 4.20 7.15 10.10 — X Pussycat — 4015 St. Laurent 845-5215

Love Secrets of the Kama Sutra & Doctors from Oh! Copenhagen — Both in color — 18 yrs adults — Kama Sutra 1:30, 4:20, 7:10, 10:00 — Doctors 12:00 2:50, 5:40, 8:30 — Beaver — 5117 Park Ave — 844-1932

The Parthenon Dancers of Greece — Dir.: Kaiti & Andreas Frangedakis — Company of 40 — November 2 - 2:30 & 7:30 P.M. — Tickets $8 $7 $6 $4 $3 — On sale: CCA 1822 Sherbrooke West, Place des Arts, Montreal Trust PVM, Sauvé Frères. Limited half rate tickets on $7 students and Golden Age on sale at CCA only — Chargex 932-2234 Master Charge — Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier

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